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Thursday, 18 April 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gasana	(Rwanda)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Musayev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Shin Dong Ik
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Togo	Mr. M'Beou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: Baroness Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. António Guterres, who is participating in today's meeting via videoteleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Baroness Amos.

Ms. Amos: The situation in Syria is a humanitarian catastrophe, with ordinary people paying a price for the failure to end the conflict. The parties to the conflict have become increasingly entrenched in the rhetoric and reality of war, with total disregard for the impact on people's lives. This body has been unable to reach the consensus necessary to support a political resolution to the crisis.

The destruction of essential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, the devaluation of the currency, rising food prices, a shortage of fuel and electricity and a lack of water has had an impact on the majority of Syrians. The needs are growing rapidly and are most severe in the conflict and opposition-controlled areas. The latest figures show 6.8 million people in need, 4.25 million people internally displaced and an additional 1.3 million who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The economic collapse has led to a consequential collapse in people's coping mechanisms. At the same time that needs are growing dramatically, so, too, are the constraints inhibiting our ability to scale up the humanitarian response.

Therefore, the question facing all of us around this table is: when is not enough too little, and when does continuing to do too little become part of the problem?

Syria's main cities have been devastated by the conflict. Dayr al-Zawr, Hama, Homs and Idlib have been reduced to rubble. A United Nations inter-agency convoy that crossed the front lines in Aleppo last week witnessed the extraordinary destruction in the city. Large parts do not have running water because there is no electricity. Waste is piling up, raising fears that diseases will multiply as the summer heat approaches. There are growing concerns about outbreaks of diarrhoea and, potentially, even cholera if the most basic of services cannot be urgently restored. The group visited a hospital in Aleppo, where more than 3,500 war-wounded patients had reportedly been treated. There is no blood bank, and doctors are performing surgery at times without anaesthetics or even suture thread. The hospital and its staff are regularly hit during fighting.

However, our descriptions cannot begin to give the Council the real picture of the horrors being meted out every day. We have heard testimonies of houses burned with families inside and of people being bombed and killed while queuing for a piece of bread. That is the reality of Syria today.

Children are among the ones who suffer most. More than 3 million have already been affected, including 2 million displaced. Children have been murdered, tortured and subjected to sexual violence. Many do not have enough food to eat. Millions have been traumatized by the horrors they have witnessed. The brutal conflict is not only shattering Syria's present, it is also destroying its future.

The High Commissioner for Refugees will brief the Council on the situation of the more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. I share his concern about the growing impact of the refugee crisis on neighbouring countries, particularly Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. We urgently need to increase our support to those countries and give them the help they need to continue to keep their borders open.

I visited Syria four times in the past year. My most recent visit was in January, and I was able to report to the Council areas of improvement in our relationship with the Syrian Government, including their agreement

that United Nations humanitarian agencies and our partners could access all areas of Syria and their agreement to fast-track administrative procedures to facilitate an effective humanitarian response.

I regret to inform the Council that, since my visit in January, bureaucratic obstacles have grown and are inhibiting our ability to respond. Twenty-one visas are pending, many for more than two months. All aid convoys require 72 hours' notice, with as many as 10 notes verbale being exchanged to gain approval for a single convoy. The approved list of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has recently been reduced, from 110 to 29. Only four additional international NGOs have been approved this year and, given the bureaucratic hurdles, only one is operational.

The approval to open United Nations hubs in six key cities was issued more than a year ago, yet this has only been operationalized recently for two cities, with a commitment to continue discussions on two more. Notwithstanding the fact that NGOs are cleared to accept United Nations funding, every project is considered in detail by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the result that projects designed in February for funding under the Central Emergency Response Fund are still awaiting final approval in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Twenty-two armoured vehicles, which are so vital for staff security, are still pending approval for import. In the past 24 hours, we have been informed that every truck needs a permit signed by two ministers to enable clearance through Government checkpoints. When I tell the Council that a convoy from Damascus to Aleppo goes through 50 checkpoints, half of them Government-controlled, members will appreciate the impossibility of that request. We cannot do business that way.

The continued conflict and the proliferation of armed groups has made Syria a highly unpredictable and insecure environment, jeopardizing aid organizations' operations. In the past two months, access to those in the most severe need has diminished. Homs is a good example. In February and March, 276,000 people in the most severe need were effectively cut off from assistance, as the Government had closed down Syrian Arab Red Crescent cross-line operations. We have similar restrictions in Rif Damascus, Aleppo, Dar'a and elsewhere. They have all been the target of United Nations-led cross-line missions, but, due to access restrictions, the scale of aid delivered falls far short of the needs.

In the case of Aleppo, it is important to highlight that, contrary to some widely held perceptions, aid flows across the Turkish border have significantly declined in the past two months. The main crossing point at Kilis, through which 50 per cent of aid reportedly flows, has recorded a reduction to approximately 20 trucks per day, down from between 50 and 80 trucks two months ago. The assistance coordination unit, the humanitarian arm of the Syrian coalition, has limited capacity and access. We are therefore not reaching those most urgently in need of our help, that is, the 2.5 million people in Aleppo and north of the city. The strengthening of the assistance coordination unit should not come at the expense of Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The data available to us shows that the people in the opposition-held areas are in the most urgent need. We have a duty and a responsibility to try to reach them. During my recent visit to Turkey, I was horrified to hear accounts of children dying of hunger in those areas. We need to get aid into those hard-to-reach areas. It is difficult to do that cross-line because of bureaucratic constraints.

The Council needs to consider alternative forms of aid delivery, including cross-border operations, because too many lives are being lost. When I tell the Council that the journey from Damascus to Aleppo is 310 kilometres, with the 50 checkpoints that I mentioned, members should remember what I said about the need for ministers now to sign off each truck — the journey from Kilis to Aleppo is just 56 kilometres.

Across the country, humanitarian convoys are regularly attacked or shot at and their personnel are intimidated or kidnapped. As an example, on 21 March, a World Health Organization (WHO) convoy carrying medical assistance for 80,000 people was hijacked by an armed group on its way from Tartus to Aleppo, and all the supplies were stolen. Yet, despite the threat, humanitarian workers continue their critical work.

I want to pay particular tribute to the work of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers. They have shown incredible dedication, impartiality and courage since the beginning of the conflict. Many of them do not hesitate to risk their lives every day to bring assistance to the people in need, whether they live in Government- or opposition-controlled areas. Eighteen have been killed in the course of their humanitarian work. Given

its network across the country and its capacity to negotiate access to almost all the affected areas, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is an invaluable partner to the United Nations and the other humanitarian organizations in Syria. They proved it again during the mission to Aleppo last weekend, when its volunteers were welcomed on both sides of the line. We all need to support the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Syria needs it.

There has been a qualitative and quantitative step-change in the United Nations agency presence and response in Syria, including the establishment of a hub in Homs. The deployment of a senior resident humanitarian coordinator to oversee the response has finally been agreed with the Government and is expected in the coming weeks. In March, World Food Programme food assistance reached close to 2 million people across the country, many of whom are in areas under opposition control. UNICEF and partners have reached more than 5 million people with safe drinking water, and they aim to reach an additional 5 million in the coming months through the chlorination and repair of urban and rural water supply systems. The provision of primary and secondary health-care services to approximately 2.7 million Syrians has been supported by the WHO and its partners. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East continues to assist the 400,000 Palestinian refugees, many of whom face future displacement.

I can also report some improvement in the funding situation since my last briefing to the Council. About half of the $1.5 billion required to cover Syria's humanitarian needs until June has been received, with the recent allocation of the $300 million pledged by the Kuwaiti Government in January — a welcome and timely disbursement by the Amir of Kuwait. I ask those Member States that have not yet converted their conference pledges to cash to do so urgently.

I cannot overstate the seriousness of the current situation in Syria. I do not have an answer for those Syrians to whom I have spoken who ask me why the world has abandoned them. While the humanitarian situation on the ground is becoming increasingly disastrous every day, the limitations on the ground have forced us into being precariously close to suspending some critical humanitarian operations.

We are approaching the point of no return. Members of the international community, particularly members of the Council, must urgently come together in support of the Syrian people. As a matter of priority, the Security Council must find ways to reduce the level of violence and to stop the bloodshed. Parties must be reminded of their obligation to protect civilians and to abide by international humanitarian law. The consequences of violating those rules must be made clear to all. The protection of medical facilities, staff and patients, in particular, must be ensured at all times. Parties must demilitarize hospitals and, in the conduct of hostilities, must take all precautionary measures to avoid hitting medical facilities or staff.

The Council must also request the parties to ensure the safe and unimpeded access of aid organizations to those in need in all areas of Syria. It is not acceptable that humanitarian workers continue to be targeted while bringing relief to people. If some routes are not safe, it is the responsibility of the parties to identify alternative routes, including across international borders.

We all look to the Council to guarantee the peace and security of the people of our world. My appeal is on behalf of not only the Syrian people but also all those seeking to assist them. We are losing hope. We cannot do our jobs properly. We look to the Council to take the action necessary to end the brutal conflict.

The President: I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres: First of all, I want to thank the Security Council for this new opportunity to address it on the Syrian refugee crisis.

Re-reading what I said in my last intervention, in February, I am almost tempted to limit my present statement to just 10 seconds. Everything that I said last time is still true, but it has all got much worse. If nothing politically dramatic happens, things will go on getting worse for the months to come.

Refugees were fleeing Syria at a rate of about 3,000 a day in December. That number grew to 5,000 in January. Eight thousand people have crossed Syria's borders every single day since February. That totals 400,000 new refugees in the seven weeks since my last briefing.

As of yesterday, counting only those registered or waiting to be registered, there were 1,367,413 Syrian refugees across the Middle East and North Africa. Including the internally displaced, a quarter of the entire population of Syria has been forced to leave their

homes. The plight of Palestinian refugees remains as dramatic as I last reported.

However, such stark numbers say little about the horrendous suffering of a people, the progressive collapse of a State and the physical destruction of a country.

Let us be very clear: there is no humanitarian solution for the Syrian crisis. That is why it is so tragic that we are not even seeing an inch of progress towards a political solution. We as humanitarians, therefore, are forced to go on planning for the impossible. Together with our 60 partner organizations and the host States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is now preparing the fifth version of our regional response plan to assist the ever-growing number of refugees. Valerie Amos, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is leading similar efforts to update the humanitarian assistance plan inside Syria.

That process is still ongoing, but the preliminary planning figures are terrifying. If nothing changes, at the current pace there may be up to 3.5 million Syrian refugees by the end of this year, and probably up to 6.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country. That is not just frightening; it risks becoming simply unsustainable. There is no way to adequately respond to the enormous humanitarian needs those figures represent, and it is difficult to imagine how a nation can endure so much suffering.

I know that, as High Commissioner for Refugees, I should confine my remarks to the scope of my mandate. As a citizen of the world, however, I cannot refrain from asking: is there no way to stop this fighting so as to open the door for a political solution? But while we continue to wait for a miracle to happen, it is our duty to do everything we can to protect, assist and respect the dignity of all those Syrians who have sought safety abroad, mainly in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq.

For that to be possible, all of the humanitarian actors involved need levels of financial support that are out of proportion with the established humanitarian aid budgets of traditional donors. Together with my colleagues from UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, I have been asking Governments and parliaments to establish extraordinary funding mechanisms for the Syria crisis. I am also extremely grateful for the generous recent contribution from the Government of Kuwait to multilateral aid agencies, and I hope others will follow that example. We cannot let the Syrian people down. The Syrian people, who have always been extremely generous in hosting refugees from Palestine and Iraq, always sharing their resources with them, now need our support.

Syria is much more than a humanitarian crisis. In my last intervention before the Council, I spoke about the real risk of the conflict spilling over across the region and of the situation escalating into a political, security and total humanitarian disaster that would completely overwhelm the international response capacity.

The first step necessary to avoid such an escalation is for the international community to provide massive support, especially to the two countries that are the most dramatically impacted by the Syrian conflict and the refugee outflow it has caused: Jordan and Lebanon.

All of Syria's neighbours need international solidarity, and one should not forget that Turkey in particular has been making an enormous financial investment of more than $750 million in direct assistance alone to over 300,000 Syrian refugees. However, Jordan and Lebanon, each hosting about a third of the registered refugee population in the region, must be provided especially solid support.

For Lebanon, the Syrian crisis has become an existential threat. The population has grown by more than 10 per cent, if one counts the registered Syrian refugees alone. Most of them are staying in the country's poorest regions. Taking into account the refugees who are not seeking registration and Syrian migrant workers, some even estimate that up to a quarter of the population of Lebanon may now be Syrian.

Refugees are staying with local families and scattered across nearly 1,200 towns and villages. Some Lebanese households host more than 25 Syrians under their roofs. The political wisdom of Lebanon's leadership has so far kept the country out of the Syrian conflict. But security incidents along the border pose a serious challenge for Lebanon. In addition to facing dire economic consequences because of its neighbour's internal turmoil, Lebanon has not received any direct international support in many months. That has to change urgently. International solidarity must match the enormous effort that the country has been making to step up the response to the Syrian crisis and to deal with its staggering implications for the Lebanese economy and delicate social and political balance.

Jordan is also coming under tremendous pressure as a result of the conflict next door. Completely dependent on energy imports, and with water scarcity becoming a major problem, the Jordanian economy was already struggling before turmoil broke out in Syria. But the situation has become increasingly fragile since 2011. Like in Lebanon, the Syria crisis has caused a significant drop in revenues from trade, tourism and foreign investment, compounded by the impact of a very large refugee influx.

Jordan's economic indicators are worrying, with unsustainable public and external deficit levels, and the country has had to apply tough austerity measures. My appeal to the international community is to extend the massive financial support that Jordan needs, with the understanding that its economic adjustment requires sufficient flexibility to prevent levels of social unrest that could entirely jeopardize the stability of the country.

I know from the experience of my own country what austerity means, and what impact it has on society. But in Jordan, the regional context is infinitely more fragile than in southern Europe, and the social and political risks are incomparably higher.

Helping Syria's neighbours deal with the human fallout of this terrible conflict is crucial for preserving the stability of the entire region. This is not just another refugee crisis; what happens in Syria and in the neighbouring countries potentially has much wider, even global, implications. By keeping their borders open to thousands of refugees fleeing day after day, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and others are doing an extraordinary service to the international community. Failure to give those countries the support that they need to continue providing sanctuary to so many suffering Syrians would not only mean abandoning a people and a whole region. It would be the world's blindness to its own best interest.

The President: I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council and for your continued and unwavering support in addressing sexual violence in conflict.

Today I am here to plead with the Council on behalf of the victims of sexual violence in Syria. Those victims have been raped, tortured and humiliated. They are either internally displaced or live as refugees. They do not have a voice, and they are not part of any statistics. We estimate that there are hundreds of survivors, but this could be only the tip of the iceberg.

Women and girls displaced by the conflict relate that sexual violence, including rape, is one of the main reasons why they have fled their homes and left the country. We hear of girls being raped in front of their fathers, wives in front of their husbands. We are aware that both Government forces and opposition fighters are abducting women and girls to extract intelligence, at times using them as leverage for the release of prisoners. With the conflict becoming increasingly sectarian and violations more militarized, the presence of foreign fighters, including those affiliated with Islamist groups, who have joined armed opposition groups have increased the vulnerability of civilians and the possibility of revenge rapes against them.

Earlier this year, in February, I briefed the Security Council and brought to the Council's attention the incidents of sexual violence highlighted in the report of the international commission of inquiry on Syria. The commission noted numerous cases of sexual violence committed by Government forces and the Shabbiha, including the use of sexual violence in detention, the targeting of family members of opposition fighters, and the rape of women and girls during house searches and at checkpoints, which could amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.

The commission, in its March update, reported that those widespread patterns of sexual violations continued. In one indicative case, between 25 and 60 women were forcibly disembarked from a bus and detained by Government forces, with multiple accounts alleging that the women were sexually abused.

The systematic practice of sexual violence in detention as part of an organized policy against women, men and even children is also appalling. A 14-year old boy was threatened with rape during interrogation, while a 14-year old girl, whose mother had links with the opposition, was abducted from the streets by four men, two of whom were in military uniform. The girl was held captive for days. During interrogation, she was beaten with electrical wire, given injections and had cigarettes extinguished on her chest. She was denied food and water for extended periods of time and was then raped by four men. On her release, the girl

was taken out of the country. Since then, she has tried to commit suicide three times.

What was those children's crimes? The boy could have been our son; the girl could have been our daughter. We know that war can be brutal, but to fight it on the bodies of women and children — humiliating and punishing them and subjecting them to absolute terror — can never be acceptable.

In response to my briefing to the Security Council in February, the Syrian Government shared with me, in a letter, details of some incidents of kidnapping, sexual violence, torture and other serious human rights violations carried out by opposition fighters, as well as information about the arrests of some of those perpetrators by Syrian security forces. The International Federation for Human Rights interviewed a Syrian man who had witnessed the kidnapping of a young girl by elements of the Free Syrian Army. The girl was raped and then killed. Her body was thrown in front of her house, with the blame allegedly attributed to the Syrian Army. I strongly urge the leadership of the Free Syrian Army and other armed groups to halt such violations, to issue clear directives to commanders throughout their chains of command to prevent sexual violence, and to hold those who commit, command or condone such crimes accountable.

I also urge President Al-Assad, in the strongest terms possible, to ensure that all persons in Government custody are treated humanely, in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. I reiterate my call for the Syrian authorities to investigate all allegations of sexual violence and to hold each and every perpetrator accountable.

The perpetrators I have referred to know that the world is watching. They know that the international community will hold those responsible for such heinous acts liable. They can misinform and they can lie, but my message to them is clear: justice may be delayed, but it will not be denied. We will pursue them by any and all means, we will find them, and one day bring them to justice.

It is a terrible truth that sexual violence maims the survivors not only physically, but also psychologically and socially, with deep and long-lasting consequences. The stigma that attaches to survivors means that crimes are rarely reported. Victims face the risk of honour killings by their family members or of being forcibly married to their rapists. Survivors feel they would rather be killed than raped. In fact, many have tried to commit suicide.

While we work to end conflicts, we must not forget our obligations to the survivors of sexual violence. They need support to rebuild their lives, with urgent access to emergency medical services, including services to prevent pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as legal assistance and social support. The United Nations and non-governmental organization partners are putting in place services and referral and coordination mechanisms in some neighbouring countries, but greater support and more targeted funding are required. One of the priorities is to establish medical centres in border areas to address war injuries, including sexual violence. It is also imperative that services for survivors be made available and accessible inside Syria.

As we just heard from my two colleagues, thousands of people flee Syria every day to neighbouring countries in search of safety and protection, but they continue to be vulnerable. In various refugee camps, a distressing trend of coerced marriage of young Syrian girls has emerged, with families seeking to lessen the burden of dependents on their dwindling resources. However, I am heartened to note that at least one report from a camp in Jordan indicates that families are rejecting marriage offers from outsiders and have chosen to delay the marriage of their girls in view of the unstable environment. Allegations of the human trafficking of young women and girls are also on the rise, while a severe shortage of medical and psychosocial counselling services remains.

There are also those in Syria who are less visible and less heard from, but no less vulnerable — the Syrians who are uprooted within their country, many of whom, as we just heard from my colleague, Ms. Amos, remain out of reach of international assistance and media attention. What do we know about the human rights violations that are being perpetrated against displaced women and children? What measures can we put in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence against them?

As I recently saw in Somalia, the insecure nature of internally displaced person camps and settlements, the presence of armed men in and around such camps and the fact that the camp population consists mostly of single women, female-headed households and widows means that they are easy prey for sexual violence. It is

imperative that the Government allow access for human rights monitors with a view to reporting, as well as for service providers to be able to respond to survivors of sexual violence.

We have watched and we have discussed, and now it is time to take concrete action. My resolve in fighting sexual violence in conflict is strengthened, and I intend to visit Syria as soon as possible. In my corner, I have the support of the Security Council and the support, expressed in a declaration signed last week, of the Group of Eight. Therefore, on behalf of the survivors, I once again plead with the members of Security Council and Governments with influence over the parties to the conflict to demonstrate their commitment and to translate their will into results by ending the carnage and protecting the Syrian people, especially women and children.

The President: I thank Ms. Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui: I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to speak before the Security Council today. The Syrian conflict, now entering its third year, has been a catastrophe for the civilian population. Children have suffered most and in the most heartbreaking ways. The emergency is indeed a children's crisis. There are now more than 3 million children inside Syria who have been affected, of whom almost 2 million are internally displaced. Additionally, more than 600,000 children are refugees in the subregion.

Although we can never know the extent of the violations against children while the conflict continues to rage, thousands of children have been killed and thousands more have been injured and maimed in the ongoing fighting. Children have been killed in their homes and in their schools; some have died trying to reach hospitals or while hiding in shelters. The use of cluster munitions has resulted in hundreds of children losing hands, arms or legs. Also of concern is the fact that children in need of urgent medical care are often not able to gain access to adequate medical assistance. Well over half of Syria's health facilities are either damaged or cannot safely be reached, and approximately 40 per cent of hospitals are inoperative. Many children have recounted experiences of days spent in makeshift hospitals and travelling under extreme conditions to reach hospitals in safe areas or in neighbouring countries.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the education system has been deeply impacted, with many schools being occupied by warring parties, damaged or destroyed. In addition, we are receiving reports of teachers being killed, threatened and forced to flee. Recent figures show that an estimated 2,500 schools are damaged or destroyed, while approximately 2,000 are being used as shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs). In certain areas, children have not been to school in more than 18 months. In the Aleppo governorate, school attendance has dropped to 6 per cent. Girls' attendance has been particularly affected by the insecurity. Future generations of Syrians are being denied the right to learn in peace.

As previously noted, refugee children inside Syria are in a difficult position. Palestinian and other refugee children have been killed or forced to flee their homes and to live in need in IDP shelters. Only 35 per cent of Palestinian children have access to schools today, and many have fled to neighbouring countries out of fear for their safety. When I visited Damascus in December of last year, I met many Palestinian IDP children in Yarmouk Camp who were living in dire circumstances. Today, the security situation in Yarmouk is precarious, and I cannot help but think about those children and the fear and anxiety they and their families must live with each day.

In the current conflict, with no end in sight, children are becoming increasingly vulnerable to recruitment and use, both direct and indirect, by all parties to the conflict. My Office has been gathering information about the use of children as young as 10 years of age in various ways, such as porters, messengers and combatants, by opposition groups. My Office also received information regarding the use of children as human shields by Government forces. I call on all parties to take immediate measures to halt any association of children.

The disproportionate use of force and the fact that combat is largely taking place in civilian areas, without any precautionary measures and with the use of indiscriminate weapons, are having serious effects on the child victims of bombardment and other violence, but also on the wider societal fabric that protects children, their families and caregivers. I personally witnessed the extreme levels of destruction

in civilian areas in Homs and Rif Damascus during my recent visit. Additionally, the impact of high levels of violence on all children in Syria is serious and will have a long-term effect for the future of the country. When I last visited, all of the children and families with whom I spoke recounted horrific stories of death and destruction — a cycle of violence with no end.

I am here not only to brief the Council on the terrible impact that the conflict is having on the children of Syria, but to implore it to do more to make all parties take up their responsibilities to protect the children of Syria. My colleagues have explained in detail the ever-smaller space afforded to the United Nations and its partners to provide life-saving assistance. But we continue to strive to do what is necessary and what we can in those dire circumstances. I have held discussions with both the Government and the opposition forces and have received commitments from both sides, but the space to act on those commitments is shrinking. In particular, I would like to ask the Council to remind all parties of their responsibilities to prevent violations against children during conflict and to issue public commitments.

The Government should commit to take all the necessary precautions during combat to prevent child death and injury, avoid the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas and cease immediately its use of human shields and investigate all allegations in that regard. In addition, it must ensure the safety of all health and education facilities in areas it controls.

The opposition forces should fulfil their commitments to respect applicable international humanitarian law and, in particular, engage with the United Nations on their commitment to address the issue of children among their ranks.

The urgent action of the Council on behalf of those children cannot wait another day, as each day is at the cost of countless lives.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for successfully managing the work of the Security Council this month. By the same token, I would also like to thank the ladies and the gentleman who briefed us at this meeting.

Today, the Syrian people are celebrating the sixty-seventh anniversary of Syria's independence from French colonizers. I take this opportunity at the Security Council table to salute the soul of the first martyr who fell in the fight against the colonizer, who was then the Minister for Defence, Yousef Al-Azmeh. I would like to assure him that the legacy he entrusted to the Syrian people is in capable hands.

The people of my homeland, Syria, oppose occupation and reject dominance and subjugation, as everybody knows. Anyone who may think, even for a moment, of turning back the clock is delusional, because the people of Syria, who have thousands of years of history, will not allow anyone — however great or mighty, working openly or covertly, old or new, near or far — to threaten their sovereignty, dignity, political independence and national unity. Although there are some differences in the way Syrian citizens love their homeland, they are all determined to stand united in the face of any attempt to undermine Syria's dignity, its political independence and its well-established national principles.

Allow me to thank Ms. Valerie Amos, Ms. Margaret Chan, Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Mr. Antonio Guterres and Mr. Anthony Lake for the appeal they issued on behalf of the United Nations in the *New York Times* on 15 April. We applaud the humanitarian feeling they expressed towards Syria and its people. We would have wished that their appeal had touched upon the core issues causing the suffering of the Syrian people and addressed the state of the unilateral, coercive and illegal measures imposed on them. We would also have wished that it had mentioned what Syrians are experiencing in terms of the dangers, challenges and threats stemming from the spread of international terrorism on Syrian territory and the impact of that indiscriminate terrorism, as illustrated by the mass killing, displacement and destruction of not only infrastructure and human beings, but of all that Syria represents in the region, namely, coexistence, social harmony, religious tolerance and cultural and ethnic diversity. Syria has a balancing role to play in a volatile and sensitive area of the world. The region's many assets are being trampled by the bloody confluence of Arabs who live in an era of ignorance and Israel's interests and its protectors.

The crisis in Syria has revealed serious flaws in the system of international relations and the mechanisms for applying the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

All the challenges and risks faced by Syria are being considered in a manner riddled with unprecedented double standards and scandalous political hypocrisy. There is no longer any doubt that the mechanisms of so-called international action function in a selective manner. The indiscriminate terrorism that is battering my country finds zealous supporters here among us: those who are working to give it legitimacy in the media, as well as politically and diplomatically. They give legitimacy to that terrorism as part of a movement in my country, while they claim to be fighting the same terrorism in Mali, the African Sahel and Libya.

There are also those who defend and seek to give legal status to the economic blockade that is stifling my country's capabilities and undermining the living conditions of its people, while at the same time the European Union is discussing purchasing Syrian oil, which rightfully belongs to the Syrian people, from the terrorist groups that control certain oil wells in Syria. I would like to take this opportunity to say that the Government of Syria will bring before the Council all those who finance terrorism in my country, either by purchasing stolen oil from terrorist groups or in any other manner. Our charge against them will be financing terrorism rather than eliminating it.

We therefore wish to say today that there is no justification for any Western Government to ignore the terrorists among its citizens crossing international borders into Syria and actively participating in the shedding of Syrian blood. After today, the Syrian people will not forgive those who have facilitated the movement of thousands of European and other Western terrorists and jihadists, who are sponsored by well-known intelligence agencies, across the borders of dozens of countries — from Australia to the United States of America — with the ultimate goal of reaching the Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian borders with Syria, where they are sheltered and accommodated in training camps and then enter my country and spread destruction and sabotage and shed innocent blood. We also cannot forget the Israeli partnership with Salafist, Takfiri and terrorist groups, which enables those armed groups to cross the separation line into the occupied Syrian Golan and to have their wounded treated in Israeli hospitals before returning them to Syrian territory, once again across the separation line.

Those States and parties, through the actions I just mentioned, seek to have their illegal and immoral actions damage the sovereignty, role and status of Syria in the United Nations. Legal and political scholars may have plenty of time to study the case of Syria, a founding State Member of the United Nations, and what it was subjected to at the hands of political wheelers and dealers.

My Government emphasizes its commitment to its obligations towards the United Nations in accordance with the 2013 humanitarian response plan, which helped deliver humanitarian assistance to various regions of Syria, including the A'zaz area, which is approximately 1 kilometre from the Turkish border. We are undertaking such actions with the United Nations within the framework of General Assembly resolution 46/182.

The ability of the Syrian Government to fully comply with the humanitarian response plan has been hampered by poor funding and the conditions imposed. The commitments announced by donors in the media, including those undertaken at the Kuwait meeting held in January and at a number of other international forums, remain unfulfilled. We all know that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has received only 34 per cent of the requisite funding. That confirms what we have said many times before, namely, that those pledges are nothing but media propaganda promoted by crisis mongers and those who spread lies.

In response to the cooperation of the Syrian Government, there are parties, known to everyone, who shamelessly insist on contributing to sustaining the cycle of violence in my country through support to terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida, which is a clear threat to peace and security in Syria, the region and the world. Many reports indicate that some Governments' consciences have been bought off by petrodollars and that they have opened their borders to the passage of weapons to be delivered to groups responsible for indiscriminate acts of terrorism in my country. Those weapons are purchased by Qatari and Saudi petrodollars from several sources, which are well known to everyone, and smuggled to this day across the borders of some of Syria's neighbouring countries from Libyan arms depots, according to the final report (S/2012/163) of the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011). I have a copy of that report with me here, which refers to the smuggling of weapons from Libya and other places, with financing from the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. This is not a report prepared by my Government, but by the Council's own experts.

I would like to emphasize the exclusive responsibility of the Syrian Government for protecting its citizens, in accordance with the principles of international law and in a manner that safeguards its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and restores its constructive leadership role on the international stage.

The crude and excessively compliant and aggressive propaganda that some Governments are seeking to promote is intended to justify their attempts to interfere in Syria's domestic affairs — in breach of Syria's sovereignty — on pretexts such as humanitarian intervention, imposing no-fly zones, establishing safe humanitarian corridors and the concept of the responsibility to protect.

Some States hosting Syrian refugees seek to exacerbate the Syrian refugee crisis by preventing them from returning to their homeland and are trading on their suffering, despite the repeated and continued requests of the Syrian Government to the Governments of those States to allow Syrians who want to return to their homes to do so.

With regard to sexual violence, I would like to recall the statement that I delivered on behalf of my country to the Security Council yesterday, 17 April (see S/PV.6948). I should like to add that, throughout its history, Syria has never witnessed such heinous crimes as those being perpetrated today by jihadist thugs and bandits. Women in Syria used to take pride in the secure and safe environment provided to them to play their natural role in society. Syria used to rank third in the world in terms of safety. However, the complex phenomenon of sabotage has entered Syrian society and has destroyed that way of life in Syria. Armed terrorist groups with Wahhabi, Salafist and Takfiri ideologies imported from petrodollar Gulf countries entered from neighbouring countries. Such groups, backed by the extensive financial, intelligence, military and media support and weapons provided by certain Arabs from a bygone era of ignorance and Western collusion, in partnership with Israel, have worked deliberately and systematically to sabotage the security and safety of Syrians, including women and children.

Dozens of political and media reports, as well as the testimonies of well-known non-governmental groups, have shown that armed terrorist groups have resorted to recruiting children into their ranks. They force them to take up arms, participate in terrorist acts and carry out the orders of the leaders of the armed groups in order to perpetrate acts of murder and sabotage against public and private property. That is in addition to the burning, looting and destruction of more than 3,000 schools and kindergartens and dozens of hospitals and hundreds of laboratories — 1,500 laboratories, in fact, in Idlib and Halab, have been displaced to Turkey — about which we have sent an official complaint to the Council. That represents a blatant attack on the rights of an entire generation of children to the education and knowledge that will enable them to help build the country in the future.

During the deliberate attacks by terrorist armed groups on educational institutions and teachers in Syria, there have been documented cases of people being directly and indirectly threatened and prevented from sending their children to school, owing to terrorist groups bombing schools with improvised explosive devices or deliberately targeting schools with missiles. Those incidents were repeated at the start of the school year in Syria.

The Syrian Arab Republic has respected its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict since 2003.

Regrettably, no speakers have mentioned the terrorist suicide bombings that have frequently struck Syrian cities. They have not talked about the attack on Halab University and the killing of the engineering and architecture students in Damascus. All those incidents were not carried out by ghosts; they were undertaken by terrorist groups financed and supported by foreigners and trained abroad. There are no ghosts carrying out terrorist acts in Syria.

While States continue to strengthen their societies on the basis of diversity, pluralism, harmony and true citizenship, we see strong, subversive Powers seeking to shatter the social contract in our region, which is famous for its diversity, richness and plurality, by promoting a culture of religious, sectarian and factional divisions and encouraging the concept of slaughtering people on the basis of their identity. Such Powers seek to displace significant parts of our societies outside their homeland. There is no Christian member of Iraqi society in Iraq, or any Christian in Palestine. The conspirators against my country are about to succeed in removing our Christian citizens.

Such matters are extremely important in the work of the Security Council. Hundreds of churches in Syria

have been burned, as well as in Iraq and other places. Hundreds of mosques have been destroyed. All those acts exist on the YouTube terrorist archive. Some accuse the Government of such heinous acts.

In that connection, I wish to emphasize that Syria will not allow another Sykes-Picot Agreement at the expense of the peoples of our region. Syria will remain the strongest link in dealing with any attempt to impose any new reality that is foreign to our region and its peoples, who have lived in harmony and coexistence with one another for centuries and have taught humankind that belonging to a homeland and respecting one's land are the greatest and most enduring emotions.

In conclusion, I would like to say that enough is enough. After two years of trading on the fate of Syria and the blood of its citizens, there must be sincere action to help my country, people and Government to move forward towards the political solution endorsed by the United Nations in resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and approved in the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). My Government insists on the implementation of that political solution through a Syrian-led inclusive national dialogue in which all Syrian people are represented. Such a dialogue will echo their voices internally, regionally and internationally, telling the entire world that enough is enough and to stop manipulating a country whose citizens have only shown goodness and love for all citizens of the world throughout their history.

A year ago, I addressed the Counter-Terrorism Committee and drew the Council's attention to the existence of Al-Qaida terrorism in Syria, but no one paid heed. Today, however, we have heard that there will be cooperation between Al-Qaida in Iraq and Al-Qaida in Syria. What we said a year ago was correct, and our reading of the political map was also correct.

Mr. Guterres, thankfully, stated that the crisis in Syria is not humanitarian in the main. That is true; the crisis in Syria is a humanitarian and political crisis in the main. Unless we deal with the main political dimension of the crisis, we will not be able to assist the Syrian people at the humanitarian level. Yes, there is a humanitarian crisis in Syria; we have mentioned that time and again. However, we need a correct legal reading of what is transpiring in the country, one that will put an end to the arrogance of and violations of international law by certain Powers that are very well known to all.

The smuggling of weapons was reported to the Security Council over a period of more than a year and a half. Those weapons, transported on ships from Libya via Lebanon and Turkey, were confiscated, and the information was submitted to the Council, but no one lifted a finger. Billions of dollars are spent on financing terrorism by means of the Gulf petrodollar, with everyone's knowledge. Weapons are being purchased in Croatia, financed by Saudi Arabia, transported to Jordan and then, via Turkey, to Syria. But no one responds. We are talking about the excruciating suffering of children and women here, and that is important and significant. We hope that the crisis will cease and that all criminals — Syrian and non-Syrian alike — will be brought to justice.

What about those who spend billions of dollars on funding terrorism? What about the resolution, adopted by the so-called League of Arab States, financing terrorism — a resolution adopted by an Arab summit to finance terrorism. The League pretends that it has a special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, pursuing a peaceful solution. How can he pursue a peaceful solution while the Arab League is financing terrorism in Syria?

I wish to make one more comment, and I apologize for taking so long.

Two days ago I was watching Al-Arabiya, the Saudi channel. The channel hosted a terrorist who leads an Islamist group affiliated with Al-Qaida. It hosted that terrorist from Istanbul and held a dialogue with him from there. When the journalist asked him, "What will you do with the minorities in Syria if you take over?" He responded: "We will judge them according to the sharia". When asked what he meant by that, he said that "the individuals belonging to those minorities can either join Islam and pay a tax, or we will kill them with a sword". That terrorist, located in Istanbul, was hosted by the Saudi Al-Arabiya channel. Many people watched him; many innocent people in Libya and Tunisia, who come to Syria to kill and be killed, watched him. That is the right image of what is going on in Syria, and I leave it to the Council for its kind attention and consideration.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and on its work during the month of April. I am fully confident that, given the crisis and the suffering

that your country, Rwanda, has known during its contemporary history, you more than anyone are aware of the human tragedy that is being experienced by the brotherly Syrian people.

I should like to express my thanks to Ms. Valerie Amos, Mr. António Guterres, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura and Ms. Leila Zerrougui for their respective important briefings.

Two years have passed since the crisis began in Syria, and the painful figures mentioned by the representative of the United Nations and its various organizations speak not only to the magnitude of that humanitarian disaster, but also to the inability of the international community to take the measures necessary to put an end to the cycle of violence and the intensifying massacres, as well as to the violations of human rights and the targeting of civilians going about their daily life. It is the responsibility of the Council and of the United Nations to ensure that the suffering of those people is recognized. The brotherly Syrian people – men, women, children and the elderly, wherever they may be – are always under the threat of bombings, or they have been displaced or become refugees in neighbouring countries. All of them deserve a better life that will meet their aspirations and hopes - a life in which their dignity and aspirations are respected.

From the Council, Lebanon has consistently reiterated its firm principled position of support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, as well as Lebanon's policy of distancing, which is aimed at preserving unity and stability. That policy, which has received support at the national and international levels, does not represent a distancing by Lebanon from the Syrian people in their humanitarian crisis. As the Minister for Social Affairs of Lebanon said last August in the Council (see S/PV.6826), Lebanon has never distanced itself from international law or international legality. It has also remained faithful to the historical, geographical and neighbourly ties between the Lebanese and the Syrian peoples. Lebanon has not forgotten that the Syrian people hosted hundreds of thousands of Lebanese refugees during the barbaric Israeli aggression against Lebanon during the July 2006 war.

As the Council is aware, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon who have been registered or who have received aid from the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees is approximately 416,000, up until 12 April of this year. That number does not include the tens of thousands who have not asked to be registered with the Office of the High Commissioner. According to statistics from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by 31 March, more than 35,000 Palestinian displaced persons had come to Lebanon from Syria, with more than 3,000 refugees arriving every day. We expect that figure to reach 1.2 million before the end of the year. Furthermore, the number of people affected by that movement of people — combining Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese returning from Syria, in addition to Lebanese host families — will reach 2.5 million before the end of the year.

According to United Nations agency statistics, approximately 34.8 per cent of those refugees have special needs, with 22.9 per cent of them being children in a precarious situation and approximately 10 per cent having serious medical conditions — bearing in mind that about half of the refugees in Lebanon and its neighbouring countries are children and young people.

We and others have ceaselessly issued warnings about the impact of the unending crisis, not only on Syria but also on neighbouring countries. We are now seeing the impact of the fighting in Syria, which has reached military dimensions, reaching the borders of Lebanon, which is threatening the security of my country. We condemn such violations, whatever their origin or whatever the reason for them.

With regard to the impact of the serious issue of refugees arising from the crisis, it has begun to affect Lebanese society and its composition. It is also having a substantial socioeconomic and security impact, given that the majority of refugees live in the poorest areas of my country. As a result, there is growing pressure on the labour market and more demand for basic resources, such as food, with the concomitant inflation and increases in housing costs that entails.

Let me reiterate today that Lebanon will never close its borders to anyone, individuals or families, who, fleeing the horrors of violence and destruction, come to seek refuge in our country. We will not send anyone back who comes to us.

Lebanon remains committed to providing assistance to all refugees from Syria and to seeing to all their essential needs in terms of protection, shelter, food, health care and education. But it is the right of Lebanon to ask neighbouring States and the

international community to share the burden, given that ours is the smallest country in terms of size and the one with the least resources, even though we are the country receiving the greatest number of Syrian refugees. That number will very soon reach almost a quarter of the Lebanese population, which is the highest reception rate of all the countries hosting refugees.

The truth, as witnessed by representatives of the United Nations and its agencies, is that Lebanon will not be able to provide the necessary care to refugees if the numbers keep growing as they are now, whether the refugees be Syrians, Palestinians or even Lebanese returning from Syria. Lebanon will not be able to cope without an increase in assistance from the international community.

Among those who have spoken out on this situation is the regional representative of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Ninette Kelley, who, earlier this month, said, with regard to assistance,

> "The plans are in place, the staff is ready, but the funds are drying up. At this level of funding, vital programmes to ensure food, clean water, schooling for children, health care and shelter for newly arrived refugees are simply impossible".

Furthermore, Mr. Étienne Labande, head of country operations for the World Food Programme in Lebanon, said that "In one month, and with the current funding, more than 400,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon will no longer receive food assistance".

Mr. António Guterres, the High Commissioner for Refugees, who has joined our meeting today, aptly summed up the situation when he said,

(*spoke in English*)

> "Lebanon needs massive support; it cannot do it alone."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Allow me to reiterate the call addressed by the President of Lebanon, Mr. Michel Sleiman, to the Doha summit last month on the holding of an international conference on Syrian refugees. He said that the conference should not simply collect donations that had been pledged at the earlier Kuwait conference, but should work towards finding a way of sharing the burden of costs in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, in order to reduce the negative impact of the refugee flow on internal and regional peace and security. Lebanon's President reiterated that message at the beginning of this month, when he encouraged the creation of camps on Syrian territory far away from the combat zones and under the protection of the United Nations. We urge the Council to look into that possibility.

Finally, Lebanon would like to join its voice to those of United Nations officials — Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme; Mr. António Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees; Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Ms. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization — in exhorting the Council to take action,

(*spoke in English*)

> "In the name of all those who have so suffered, and the many more whose futures hang in the balance: Enough! Summon and use your influence, now, to save the Syrian people and save the region from disaster."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this briefing, which gives us an opportunity to draw the attention of the international community once again to the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Syria. We followed with great concern the presentations made by the chiefs of the key United Nations humanitarian agencies.

The Syrian people's quest for a democratic and free Syria has completed its second year, while the Syrian regime continues to indiscriminately target its own people by every possible means, including the use of ballistic missiles. The ongoing assault is not only taking many lives but also destroying the historic and cultural heritage and economic infrastructure of Syria.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is deteriorating day by day. According to recent figures from the United Nations, the number of refugees has reached 1.3 million, with 4.5 million internally displaced persons and 6 million in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the number of refugees could reach 3.5 million by the end of the year if the international community fails to act urgently.

The international community has a moral responsibility to support the Syrian people in their struggle, and that has to be done urgently, collectively and decisively in the face of a deteriorating humanitarian situation, which continues to promote a serious threat to regional peace and stability.

The joint appeal by the leaders of the United Nations humanitarian agencies this week is a serious wake-up call to the international community, and yet another reminder of the need to revisit the strategies in seeking to address the crisis. It was a call to everyone to start thinking outside the box and to act immediately for an effective strategy to save the Syrian people and the region from a catastrophe.

We continue to believe that the best way to end this bloodshed is through a political solution and transition, while preserving the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria. The international community, in particular the United Nations, has a crucial role to play in that. However, pending such a solution, we should be realistic and results-oriented in addressing the humanitarian dimension — the primary consequence of the political crisis.

We in Turkey are devoting our utmost efforts to responding to the ramifications of the Syrian crisis. We are now hosting more than 190,000 Syrians in 17 camps, in addition to at least 100,000 people who found their way to various Turkish cities and towns. We are doing our best to meet their everyday needs in all areas, including those related to health and education. Furthermore, the Turkish Red Crescent is delivering humanitarian relief at the zero point of the border with Syria, with transparency in conformity with international legitimacy and humanitarian principles.

The average number of refugees crossing into neighbouring countries on a daily basis has reached 8,000, and up to 14,000 on days of intense fighting. Until six months ago, that number was a couple of thousand.

Cross-line assistance is becoming increasingly complicated, while certain humanitarian goods, such as surgical supplies, are extensively blocked by the regime. That irresponsible policy will only lead to further outflows of refugees. The Council needs to consider alternative forms of aid delivery, including cross-border operations.

Neighbouring countries cannot and should not be asked to face the pressing challenges alone. The situation is no longer sustainable, and the existing methodology is not working to realize the principles of full, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access. The international community, from the perspective of burden-sharing, must take collective action. Pledging financial support is not sufficient in itself.

We are of the view that it is high time for the international community to discuss unexplored ways and means to address the problem of internally displaced persons within Syrian territory and to find alternative destinations for those who still choose to leave because they feel insecure.

That call has been echoed by many eminent regional leaders who feel the same pressure. It is high time that those legitimate concerns were taken into consideration by the international community, and certainly by the United Nations. Otherwise, we may find ourselves in a crisis scenario much larger that what we have been struggling with to date.

Let me conclude by expressing once again our support for the Syrian people's legitimate aspirations to live in dignity, as well as our determination to continue doing our utmost in responding to the humanitarian crisis just across our border. We would also like to remind the international community of its obligation to act urgently, decisively and responsibly before it is too late.

We regret to see the use of the Security Council floor for the dissemination of inaccurate and misleading information. The Council and, through the media, the international community have surely heard the coherent views of the participants regarding the policies of the Syrian regime. The facts provided cannot be blurred by one futile attempt to argue otherwise.

Turkey will continue to show solidarity with the Syrian people, whose views cannot be heard at this platform.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite the Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.